1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

reckon, we make the somewhat surprising discovery that here the more refined work is not only not more highly paid but partly even worse paid than the cruder industry. Both as regards profits per day and profits per article produced the brass-smiths work on the whole with lower profits than the blacksmiths.[1] Why, then, does the calculation of price and profit allow for an appreciation of the specific artistic qualities of the work of tailors and embroiderers but not in the analogous instance of brass-smith work? But is it an analogous instance? In the case of tailors and embroiderers both the cruder and the more refined technique belong to the same class of production: they are both what we may loosely call luxury industries. In blacksmith and brass-smith work we have fundamentally different industries, one supplying necessities, and the other a typical fashion and luxury industry. The explanation thus seems to be that indispensability may equal aesthetic value; and that where these two diverse types of industry compete side by side the factor of necessity may balance or outweigh the appreciation of artistic qualities.

MARKET AND TRADE

We have had frequent opportunity to speak of the complexity of Nupe economics and of the far-reaching specialization of Nupe production, which must express itself most forcibly in the wide scope of trade and marketing. In a wider sense Nupe country itself is one big market. For Nupe is a country which exports and imports, and represents, besides, an important station on the route of transit-trade across Nigeria. The ancient trade-routes have to some extent been adjusted to-day to the new forms of communication, motor-roads, steamers, and railways. But to a large extent they have remained the same, for now as of old a large proportion of this transit-trade is carried to, and by, the water-way of the river Niger.

The following are the traditional trade-routes through Nupe. They run mostly roughly from north to south. One, coming from Sokoto and Birnin Kebbi, goes through Kontagora and reaches Nupe north of Mokwa; from here it goes either west, crossing the Niger at Jebba (formerly at Buka, five miles up the river) into Yoruba, or east through Laboži, Sakpe, to the Kaduna, which it crosses at Gbara, then south to Muregi and, after crossing the Niger, on to Yoruba and Kabba. A second route from Kontagora reaches Nupe Emirate north of Kutiwengi, passes through Dabbā and Kutigi, and crosses the river Niger at Ogudu, on the way to Ilorin. An alternative to this route branches off at Dabbā, crosses the Kaduna at Wuya, and ends at Bida. A third trade-route passes through Birnin Gwari and Wushishi, and reaches Bida via Gbangba. There are three routes from Bida to the south and south-east: one through Jima and Dokomba, down the Kaduna by canoe to Muregi,

[1] The profits of blacksmiths per object are: 3*d.*, 3½*d.*, 6*d.*; per day, 6*d.*, 7*d.*, 1*s.* The profits of brass-smiths per object are: 1½*d.*, 2*d.*; per day, 3*d.*, 6*d.* Higher profits are only realized in the casting of bangles in precious metal, in the casting of brass figures for tourist trade, and also in the production of ladles in the modern cheap material, aluminium.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

where the route crosses the Niger and goes on to Ilorin and Yoruba; a second, to Badeggi and Kacha, where it crosses the Niger to Eggã and Yagba country; the third route goes from Bida to Kacha, or Giddi, farther down the river, where the trade-goods are loaded on canoes on their way south to Lokoja, Idah, and Onitsa. In addition to these land routes we have also an 'all-water' route, the north terminus of which used to be at Rabá or Ogudu.[1]

Let me summarize the main facts concerning the 'international' commerce in Nupe. Nupe country exports a certain proportion of its agricultural produce, especially rice and Laboži kola-nuts, smoked fish, and a large variety of its industrial products. It imports various foodstuffs, especially palm-oil and European salt, cheap southern kola-nuts, potash, and live stock. It re-exports potash and beans from the north to the south, and palm-oil, European salt, and kola-nuts from the south to the north. This commerce follows certain interesting traditional patterns. A simple export trade from Nupe to another country is the exception: of this kind is the trade in smoked fish from the riverain districts of Nupe by rail to Ilorin and Ibadan, or the trade in Nupe glass, beads, brass, and silverware, which goes by canoe to Lokoja. In the majority of cases the import or export trade in a certain commodity is combined with a definite return trade in another commodity. Here we find the following regular 'patterns': donkey caravans from Hausa bring beans to Bida and return with kola-nuts (either the local Laboži nuts or the cheap southern variety). Other donkey caravans go north from Nupe; they are loaded in Kacha with palm-oil and salt, which arrive on the Niger Company steamers from the south, and return from the north with *kanwa* (potash) from Bornu. In Kacha the riverain Kakanda buy Nupe-grown rice, which comes down by canoe from Patigi and the Kaduna, and take it south to Onitsa, whence they return with palm-oil. Hausa traders from Kano bring horses and sheep and goats to Bida, to return to their country with Nupe straw hats. Another exchange pattern between Hausa and Nupe is the trade of potash against Bida embroidered gowns. In this trade the imported goods are invariably first sold for money, with which the goods for the return voyage are then purchased. All the variations that are theoretically possible in this threefold export and transit-trade are found to occur in practice. In other words, the Nupe merchant plays three different roles: he is either the local broker who arranges the sale of goods between importer and exporter; or he acts as wholesale trader and buys himself the imported goods to re-export them (himself supplying the transport) to their eventual destination; or he acts as retail trader and sells the imported goods either directly to the customer (on the Bida markets) or to other retail traders, who will dispose of them on the various village markets of the country.

We will begin our study of the marketing system of Nupe with the

[1] To-day the 'all-water' route goes to Jebba, the new railway and steamer station, and even farther north, the water-way north of Jebba having been made navigable for canoes. I have described this river-trade more fully in 'The Kede: A Riverain State in Northern Nigeria' (in *African Political Systems*, Oxford University Press, 1940, p. 165).

9:Nadel E-5 (1934-1935) 1935 FF52 Nupe FF52

sphere of influence of the *ledu*-organization, death penalty was executed, though in secrecy, by the people of the village themselves. But however this be, the actual issue is little affected. For even if there had existed this strong superstitious belief, the problem for us here is that it should be made use of in such a special way. The belief, the sentiments expressed in the belief, and the political institution in which they crystallize, are two entirely different things. The political system of Nupe kingdom, creating the *ledu*-organization, might actually only have adopted existing motives and ideas; but then it lent its own most sacred symbolism to their support, and at the same time formed out of their psychological appeal a rigid judicial monopoly, and a political office which almost comes to deny its origin: for the office of the *ledu* includes as we have seen also cases which have nothing more to do with death, namely the flogging of those who abused the name of the king; and ordinary flogging was done in every Nupe village.

693

III.

More than a hundred years of Mohammedan law, decades of civil war and political changes, were not powerful enough to break the spiritual influence of the *ledu* institution, the belief in its ordeals, and the sacredness of its office. But they have been able to obliterate certain details of its organization. One point in particular it is difficult to ascertain to-day: who was actually entitled to make use of the organization of 'Tsoede's hangmen'?

177 693

I found two different, and conflicting, interpretations. According to the first, the power of the *ledu* was limited to the river, and the authority over the *ledu* was, from Tsoede's time almost up till now, given into the hands of the chief of one section among the Nupe, the Kyedya. The people who call themselves Kyedya are the most powerful among the riverain Nupe. They are the canoe- and fishermen on the main river; they monopolize river traffic and trade, they look down upon their neighbours, and style themselves the 'Lords of the Waters.' They are united in a very strongly centralized political organization, and their head is the chief of Muregi, who holds the ancient hereditary title of *kuta*. The *kuta*, then, is said to be the legitimate head of the ledu organization. But a second version says that the office of the *ledu* comprised the whole country (or at least stretched inland as well), and that the power over the *ledu* belonged exclusively to the *etsu*, or kings, of the Nupe —the kings who were till the Fulani conquest the direct descendants of Tsoede.

174 105 693 631

Weighing evidence against evidence, the situation seems to be this:—Originally an organization of the Nupe king the *ledu* system was adopted later by the Kyedya. In the beginning the Nupe king alone was entitled to act through the *ledu* organization. Geographical and historical facts, reflected in the mythology of their ancestor-king, account for the connection with the river area: the territory of the young Nupe kingdom were the river banks. The river Niger, *ndáduma*, as the Nupe call it, 'Father Niger,' marks the path of the mythical Tsoede where he set out to unite the Nupe into a powerful kingdom. Even later, in historical times, when the Nupe state extended far across central Nigeria, the capitals always remained near the river: Gbara, Jima, Mokwa and Raba.[4] But also economically the Niger was the life centre of the country. The welfare of a large section of the population depended on the river. And traffic and trade, so immensely important in Nupe culture, were bound up with the Niger. What appears, then, in the context of myth as the path of the ancestor-king of Nupe, plays in the actual tribal life the rôle of a 'King's Highway,' of a vital artery of the political and economic organism over which the king extends his own special, sacred authority. Violation of the law in this area means the violation of this sacredness; and crimes committed here became crimes of a special sort, subject to a special jurisdiction which has the meaning more of a sacred vengeance than of an ordinary punishment.

174 693 631 [361] [487]

When, however, during the Fulani wars the political centre moved away from the river, finally to Bida, the present capital of Nupe, the original organization of the *ledu* must have lost force and significance. And then it was, as our evidence points out, that the Kyedya claimed the title over the *ledu*. The power over the river was now theirs, unquestioned. The Kyedya, hostile to the Fulani invaders, always boasting with their ancient lordship over the waters, and regarding themselves still in the days of British rule as equal to the king of Bida, seized this organization which seemed a

[4] *See* the map in my article on *Nupe State and Community* (Africa, VIII, 3).